

## EDITORIALS

### **BORDEN'S BABY BRAND MILK**

(Considered and approved for publication by the Publicity Bureau of the State Society.)

We have before us a letter addressed to the medical profession from the Baby Welfare Department of The Borden Company, New York. We have read this letter a number of times most carefully, and are not quite sure of our understanding of all that it says. The following statements in particular, quoted from this letter, are deserving of careful consideration by members of the State Medical Society.

"To satisfy the growing demand by pediatricians for a sweetened condensed milk put up in glass containers Borden's Baby Brand Milk has been sold by us since 1903.

"This product is not advertised to the public, and no directions appear on the container or carton. Inside the carton, however, there is a loose folder giving simple general directions for cleanliness, and feeding preparations. Should you desire to recommend Baby Brand Milk with your own special feeding directions your druggist will gladly remove the feeding direction folder from the carton if you will simply make the request on your prescription blank. . . .

"Borden's Baby Brand Milk is identical in every respect with our Eagle Brand, thus insuring the highest quality sweetened condensed milk obtainable."

### **"CASES" OR "PATIENTS"**

A medical editor and teacher of medicine has said that it is possible to predict the success and forecast the future of one who treats the sick by the uses he makes of the words "case" and "patient." Clifford Albutt, William Osler, Oliver Wendell Holmes, George Simmons, and many other great medical editors have frequently deplored the abuses of "case" and "cases" both in medical literature and in medical vocabulary. "Case" is a perfectly good word when properly used, but it is not and cannot be made synonymous with "patient." One well-known medical writer said recently that he had never fully appreciated the differences between "case" and "patient" until one of his colleagues who had been called in to see a member of his family referred to his desperately sick child as a "case."

Simple rules governing the uses of these words have been published many times in many places, and yet every editor of a medical publication is constantly distressed by the faulty uses of the words in manuscripts. This probably will continue until the teachers of more medical schools consider the error of enough importance to notice and—after correcting their own methods—teach correct usage to medical students.

If the question were only concerned with good usage, the frequent errors would not be so important. However, it goes much further, even into

the philosophy of the practice of medicine. To an ambulatory scientific laboratory every sick person is a "case," but to the true physician every sick person is a "patient."

### **PRACTICING MEDICINE BY MAIL**

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Mail order practice of medicine is assuming rather large proportions. There are numerous organizations of one sort or another, most of them east of the Rocky Mountains, that are engaged in the practice of medicine in California. The volume of this business is, of course, difficult to estimate. What data we have been able to secure indicates that it must be a rather large business or else the costs of advertising and other forms of salesmanship must be provided from some other source. One of these concerns, located in Cincinnati and apparently doing considerable business in California, enters into a contract with a subscriber to keep him well and to treat him, within certain limits, by mail, for fifteen dollars a year. The contract which this mail order doctor signs, and the form letter in explanatory literature with which he supplies his subscribers states, among other things, that they will make a "thorough, dependable, and complete chemical and microscopical analysis of the subscriber's urine upon receipt of sample once every ninety days for the period of this subscription." They furnish subscribers addressed containers to forward specimens of urine and keep the subscribers reminded of the date on which the specimen is to be forwarded. They do not, of course, tell the patient that examination of the urine, however well done, when it has stood a couple of days and been transported to Cincinnati, Ohio, or elsewhere by mail, is worth very little to any physician. They also agree to "send the subscriber a self-explanatory key for each report, together with diet suggestions and recommendations of their Medical Advisor, who compares each report with all previous analyses." The dangers of advice of this kind are, of course, obvious to every physician. They will not be understood, however, by the average patient, and these mail doctors therefore lend a "self-explanatory key" for the diets and diet suggestions that they apparently consider within the provisions of California law.

In a letter from one of these mail-order-practice-of-medicine concerns forwarded to us by one of their patients, it is stated: "There is one certain analysis that sounds the danger signal in ample time. One certain analysis that enables you to prevent the seizure of your body by such things as Bright's Disease, Diabetes, Heart Disease, and a host of others." And again, that they give "subscribers an accurate, complete, and infallible report every ninety days. This report shows the true condition of your body. It gives advance information of any approaching disease." Both of these statements are false, misleading and extremely dangerous, and there ought to be some method of preventing the continuance of this form of the "practice of medicine."